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ABSTRACT

This short document is a statement by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Board of Directors on racial harassment and colleges' and universities' responsibilities to create an environment where such acts are unacceptable. The statement defines racial harassment and asserts the educational community's need to stand against assaults on the dignity and value of any individual. The document further addresses the limits of freedom of speech and encourages the development of processes to assure that the environment of the campuses is monitored to guarantee that racial harassment is confronted and tolerance of differences is encouraged. Recommended procedures include a clear institutional position on harassment and policy and enforcement mechanisms developed by a group made up of representatives of all groups within the university as well as an institution-developed Code of Conduct and action plan to address racial harassment. Appendix A provides a sample action plan. There are two references. (JB)

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STATEMENT ON ADDRESSING RACIAL HARASSMENT

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Colleges and universities have a moral and ethical responsibility to maintain a learning environment that is nurturing, fosters respect, and encourages growth among the cultures and individuals represented on our campuses. When any member of our educational community is threatened by discriminatory acts, our fundamental freedoms are threatened. Reported acts of racial harassment have increased on campuses throughout the nation. Racial harassment is generally defined as an act or communication causing emotional stress specifically addressed to individuals or groups intended to harass, intimidate, or humiliate an individual or group because of race, ethnicity, or national origin. Members of the educational community must stand against assaults upon the dignity and value of any individual.

Colleges and universities must be strongly committed to the moral and legal principle that every member of the community enjoys academic freedom and the constitutional right to free speech. As members of that community, students, faculty, and staff share the responsibility to ensure that the rights of all are protected. Respect for these rights requires a tolerance for expression of opinions that differ from our own or that we might find abhorrent.

However, the value of free expression is undermined by acts of racial harassment that harass, intimidate, or humiliate members of the community or create a hostile or offensive campus environment. Protected free expression ends when prohibited discriminatory harassment begins.

In this spirit, NASPA members must take a lead position in fostering a campus environment that is receptive to all members of the community. Every member of the college or university community must be encouraged to take personal responsibility for fostering an environment in which acts of racial harassment are addressed and students, faculty, and staff feel encouraged to reach their maximum potential. Examples of acts of racial harassment and appropriate procedures for reporting such acts must be shared on the campus. It is imperative that members of the community know that racial harassment will be addressed and will not be tolerated.

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Campus Environment

Each college or university should establish a process to assure that the environment of the campus is monitored to guarantee that bigotry in any form is confronted and tolerance of differences is encouraged. A representative group of the campus community should be involved in both the establishment of the process and the continuing education of members. As part of that process, a

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clear statement of the institutional position on harassment should be made, and both policy and enforcement mechanisms should be established.

Rights and Responsibilities

Each college or university has a responsibility to develop a Code of Conduct designed to promote and protect the educational environment. An educational process is ideally conducted in an environment that encourages reasoned discourse, intellectual honesty, openness to constructive change, and respect for the rights of all individuals.

An individual's acceptance as a member of a college or university community amounts to neither a surrender of those individual rights accorded to all members nor a means for escaping the attendant fundamental responsibilities of membership. A Code of Conduct protecting individual rights and identifying specific responsibilities related to acts of harassment must be in place and clearly communicated to the entire community.

Each college or university needs an action plan to address racial harassment (see Example Action Plan – Appendix A). NASPA members have a role and responsibility in ensuring that their institution clearly defines an individual's rights and responsibilities and has in place explicit expectations regarding the behavior of each member of the college or university community. These expectations must be communicated and minimally include examples of racial harassment (i.e., verbal or written abuse, humiliation, harassment, and intimidation) that will not be tolerated. Members of the community must know they are responsible for their behavior and are fully accountable for their actions. All who work, live, study, and teach in a college or university do so by choice, and as such must be committed to eliminating acts of racial harassment.

References

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1990). *Campus Life: In Search of Community.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Tatel, David. (1990). "Suppression: Controls on American College Campuses" in R. Hiveley (Ed.), *The Lurking Evil: Violence and Harassment on the University Campus.* Washington, D.C.: American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

APPENDIX A

Example Action Plan — Addressing Racial Harassment

A proactive plan that recognizes a college or university's responsibility to maintain a nurturing learning environment and clearly identifies the rights and responsibilities of the members of the community is essential.

I. Campus Environment

Each college or university should establish an advisory group, comprised of faculty, staff, and students charged with monitoring campus issues of racial insensitivity and racial harassment and making related recommendations to appropriate campus entities. Specific objectives could include:

A. Educating the campus community to prevent racial harassment. The educational plan might include:

- A plan that commits to training and educating students, faculty and staff concerning racial harassment.
- Disseminating brochures, posters and related materials that encourage individuals to address and report acts of racial insensitivity or harassment.
- The encouragement of forums, speakers, debates, and other campus cultural activities.
- The development and implementation of courses on cultural diversity as a part of a college or university's required general studies curriculum.

B. Preventing discriminatory acts from occurring by developing a process to warn against potential acts of racial insensitivity or harassment.

C. Serving as a campus monitor and clearinghouse for information concerning acts of racial harassment by issuing periodic reports on the campus environment.

II. Rights and Responsibilities

Each college and university [through the dean of students and/or other appropriate individual(s)] must assist students who have or who perceive to have been subject to acts of racial harassment in resolving problems informally or through the formal grievance process.

The role of the individual(s) designated to assist should include:

A. Receiving complaints of alleged acts of harassment and making referrals when appropriate.

B. Identifying and supporting individual victims.

C. Identifying support groups for the victim(s).

D. Conducting or ensuring that an investigation of the incident occurs.

E. Initiating corrective measures to avoid a recurrence.

F. Notifying appropriate offices and key personnel of incidents.

G. If appropriate, initiating a response including a statement of condemnation.

H. Coordinating the efforts of a response team to control rumors, settle disputes, discuss issues, and determine future action.